

THINKIN' LINCOLN

OUR FREEWHEELING FOCUS ON THE FATHER ROAD

• BY JILLIAN GURNEY

"A Tribute to Gregory Franzwa"

Are you a Lincoln Highway fan? Then you're sure to recall the late Gregory M. Franzwa, scholar of Lincoln Highway history and author of a series of state-focused Lincoln Highway guidebooks. Twenty-five years ago, Franzwa founded the modern-day Lincoln Highway Association. In 2003, he became the original voice behind *American Road's* Lincoln-centric road department, "Thinkin' Lincoln: Focus on the Father Road."

Franzwa was born in Glidden, Iowa—right along the Lincoln Highway—in 1926. The rhythms of the road influenced his sensibilities from the start. As a teenager, he took up the trumpet and became a musician, playing professionally with local dance bands while he was still a sophomore in high school. World War II interrupted the melody. He joined the US Navy's V-5 flight training program and



GREGORY M. FRANZWA

was called to active duty in 1943, an enlisted man answering his country's clarion call. But by 1946, he was free again to find his own groove. He attended Iowa State College and the University of Iowa, earning a Bachelor of Journalism degree in 1950. And then he headed to St. Louis, starting a public relations firm in 1955 and starting the first of his two bands, the Tiger Rag Forever Jazz Band, in the early 1960s. He recorded ragtime and Dixieland, recording tracks such as "I Found a New Baby" and "Lee & Washington Swing" on the Happy Cats label. By that time, Franzwa was playing the tuba.

He returned to the Lincoln Highway at his own tempo. After completing his first book, *The Old Cathedral*, in 1965—and founding his own publishing house, the Patrice Press, in 1967—he gained acclaim as an expert on American western emigration routes with the issue of *The Oregon Trail Revisited*. In 1982, he formed the Oregon-California Trails Association to promote and protect pioneer pathways. And then circumstances brought home his passion for historic preservation.

"Gregory became interested in preserving the road in 1992 when he heard about a proposed project in Jefferson County, Iowa, that would have torn up some of the original road," says Franzwa's widow, Kathy Colyer Franzwa. "He met with Bob and Joyce Ausberger of Jefferson and they conceived the idea of the Lincoln Highway Association. The founding meeting was held in Ogden, Iowa, on October 31, 1992."

In 1995, Franzwa marked the start of his most extensive labor of love when he released *The Lincoln Highway: Iowa*—the first in his detailed state-by-state series of Lincoln Highway guides. *Iowa* was followed by *The Lincoln Highway: Nebraska* (1996), *The Lincoln Highway: Wyoming* (1999), *The Lincoln Highway: Utah* (2003), *The Lincoln Highway: Nevada* (2004), *The Lincoln Highway: California* (2006), and additional



THE LINCOLN HIGHWAY (1913) travels from New York to San Francisco via New Jersey, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska, Wyoming, Utah, and Nevada. An early routing dipped through Denver.

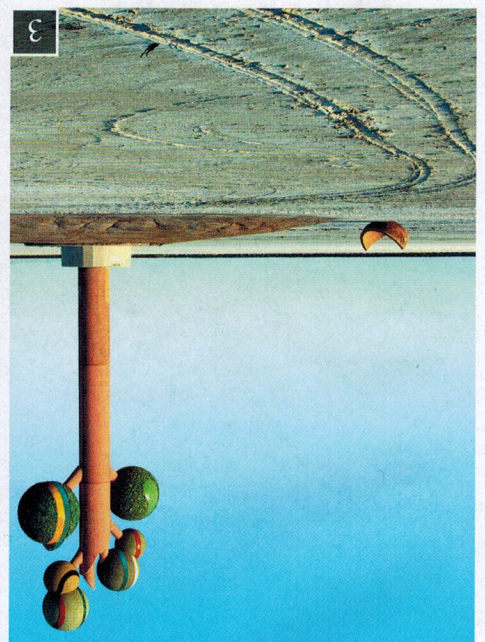
books that were a boon to the traveler, including *Alice's Drive* (2005), a reprint of the 1962 classic *Veil, Duster, and Tire Iron* detailing the 1909 coast-to-coast drive along the Lincoln Highway made by pioneer woman motorist Alice Huyler Ramsey. Franzwa never finished his Lincoln Highway series—at the time of his death, he'd completed work on *The Lincoln Highway: Illinois* (2009)—and one gets the feeling he had many more



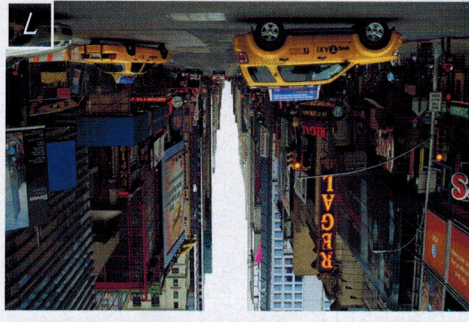
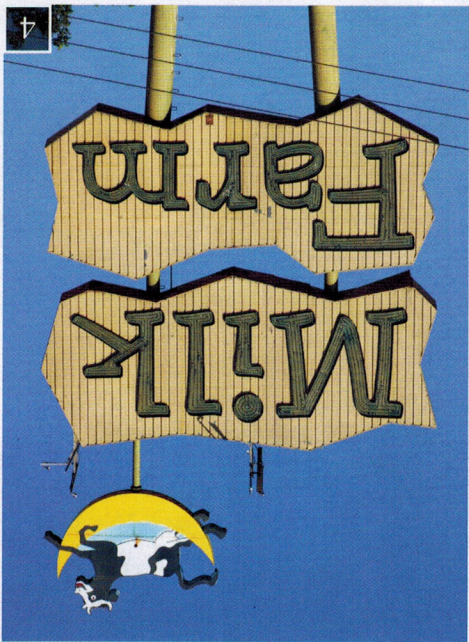
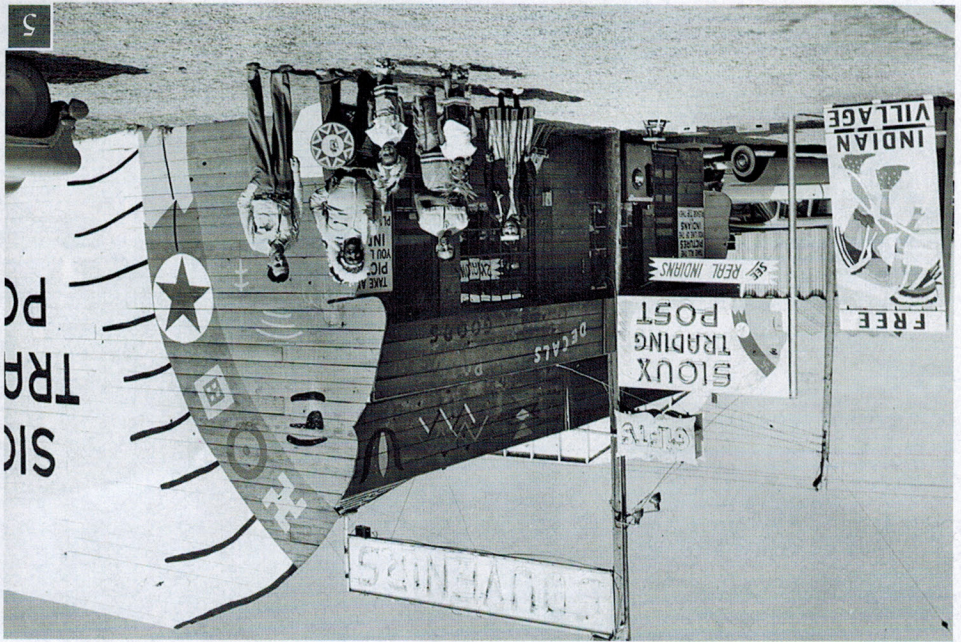
books in him if Fate had allowed him the time. He died at age 83 on March 29, 2009.

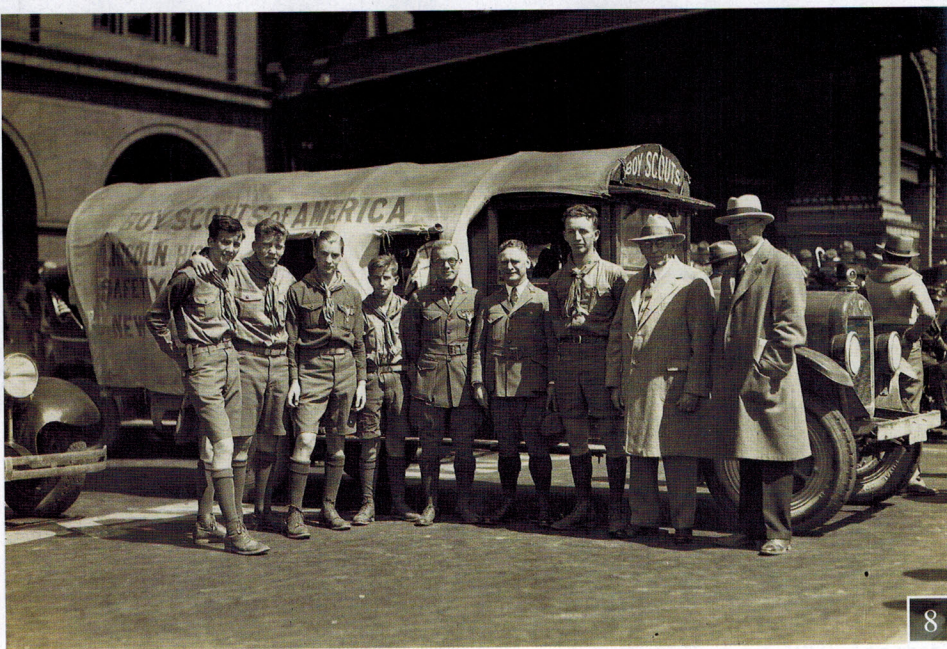
His work for *American Road's* "Thinkin' Lincoln" department followed in the tradition of his Lincoln Highway book series. His installments examined subjects such as early road guides and advertisements, the route of the Lincoln through Ohio, and the historic Goodyear Cutoff across the Great Salt Lake Desert. They laid a solid foundation for all of the Lincoln Highway authors who followed. He was fond of speaking about the "power of place"—an evocative term he employed for the sense of participation a person can feel when standing at a historical site—and we're grateful he took us along for the ride. ♥

JILLIAN GURNEY is an Editor for AMERICAN ROAD.



THINKIN' LINCOLN...AGAIN: (1) In the winter of 2003, we followed a vintage automobile into the Sierras and through the snowbanks. (2) In 1909, Alice Huyler Ramsey became the first woman to drive across the country. We examined her legacy in our Autumn 2005 issue. (3) During the winter of 2005, we took a gritty trip through the Bonneville Salt Flats, where the eighty-seven-foot sculpture *Metaphor: Tree of Utah* was created by Swedish artist Karl Momen in 1986. (4) Hey, diddle, diddle! The cow jumps over the moon atop the sky-high marquee of the Milk Farm restaurant of Dixon, California. Although the iconic eatery closed in 1986, its sign remains standing today. We visited it in the autumn of 2009. (5) Got souvenirs? The highway history of the Henline family, who operated roadside businesses that included the Sioux Trading Post of Ogallala, Nebraska, was the subject of our Winter 2008 Thinkin' Lincoln installment. (6-7) The Lincoln Highway begins in New York, where it makes its busy way through Times Square. Our visit in the summer of 2009 proved what we've long heard: Broadway always has the best shows.





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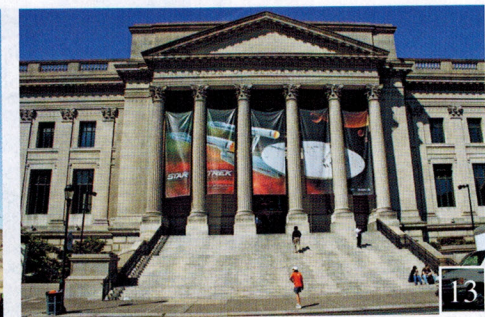
AND THINKIN'...AGAIN: (8-9) One of our favorite installments appeared in our Winter 2012 issue and told the story of lifelong boy scout Bernie Queneau. In 1928, after achieving the rank of Eagle Scout, Queneau embarked on a cross-country trip on the Lincoln Highway to plant markers along the road. In 2005, he posed with a replica marker in Ely, Nevada. **(10)** Kids and adults alike are invited to drive vintage model pedal cars at Dutch Wonderland amusement park in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. We took a spin in the spring of 2014. **(11)** Bird-lovers can see flocks of sandhill cranes each year in Nebraska's Central Platte Valley—billed as the Sandhill Crane Capital of the World—as we did over the winter of 2014. **(12)** Is it spring 2011? Time stops near Medicine Bow, Wyoming, where dinosaur hunter Thomas Boylan built a service station faced with fossils in 1932. **(13-14)** The calendar said summer 2013, but time flies inside Philadelphia's Franklin Institute—especially on the Mars Clock. **(Opposite)** During our visit to the Bonneville Salt Flats, we photographed the sixty-three-foot neon cowboy that is Wendover Will; the bright buckaroo was constructed by the Young Electric Sign Company in 1952.



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